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SUNSET, HOMECOMING

COURTESY OF WILLIAM MACBETH

WILLIAM KEITH

WILLIAM KEITH

ENVIRONMENT is unquestionably a determining factor in development and yet there is reason to believe that undue importance is sometimes attached to it. In the history of American art more than one instance is to be found of an artist developing his talent almost in the isolation of the wilderness. To an extent this was true of William Keith, the California landscape painter, whose death occurred the last of March of the present year.

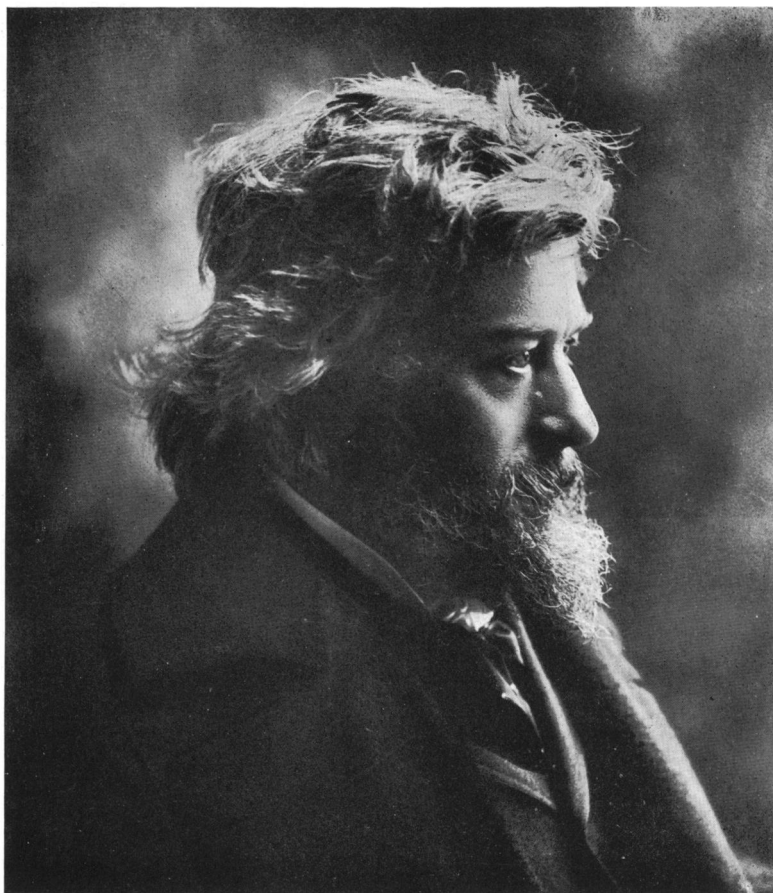
By birth, William Keith was a Scotchman, but he was brought to this country when a lad. Residing in New York and showing artistic tendencies he began his career as a wood engraver, working, after he became moderately proficient, for *Harper's Weekly* and *Monthly*. It was through this door that many another who

afterward won distinction in painting entered the field of art, and without doubt the exacting character of the work made it invaluable as training. In 1859 Mr. Keith went to California and established himself in San Francisco. Shortly after that the introduction of mechanical reproductive processes greatly lessened the demand for wood engraving, and then, but not before, he "went out of doors and tried to paint."

He was successful from the first. For both his black and white sketches and his water colors he found ready sale, and by 1869 he had laid aside enough of his earnings to go abroad and study. He went to Düsseldorf, but very little trace of the influence of that school is to be found in his work. Possibly he was not callow enough at that time—American inde-

pendence and western breadth of outlook preventing tractability. Certainly he gained more from a brief sojourn in Spain upon a subsequent occasion than from all those months of toil in Düsseldorf. Velasquez was always, to him, his own discovery and a perpetual inspiration.

terpret emotion through effect. Thus knowing his subjects by heart, and having gained technical proficiency, it was no uncommon thing for him to compose his pictures much as a musician composes music. Sometimes he would apply colors indiscriminately to a piece of



WILLIAM KEITH

William Keith's early paintings were very different from his later works, though the forests of the Sierras and the live oaks of the foot-hills were almost invariably his theme. At first his effort was to accurately copy nature and not the smallest detail was wilfully overlooked. In later years he departed far from his early method and style, disregarded detail and strove chiefly to in-

terpret emotion through effect. Thus knowing his subjects by heart, and having gained technical proficiency, it was no uncommon thing for him to compose his pictures much as a musician composes music. Sometimes he would apply colors indiscriminately to a piece of cardboard upon which he would press a second piece of board and from the resulting confusion he would discover a theme which he would work out with deliberation. His work was never irksome to him, but a joy. With him as with many other painters, as well as writers, his art was the means of self-expression and reverted individually to the artist. He was a great student of nature—a lover of the



IN THE GROVE

COURTESY OF WILLIAM MACBETH

WILLIAM KEITH

outdoor world—and with his friend John Muir, whose word pictures of the mountains are so graphic and beautiful, he took many a tramp of exploration.

In 1890 George Inness visited California, and for many weeks made William Keith's studio, over the old California Street Market, his headquarters. His influence was thereafter apparent in many of Mr. Keith's paintings. Not that Keith consciously imitated Inness, but that through him he received and continued the traditions of the Barbizon School. It was from Inness probably that he learned the method of glazing which he used so well for producing toneful effects.

He delighted in rich, strong color, and in dramatic aspects of nature. His paintings are toneful, poetical and decorative—"good to live with," a collector has said. They show, as a rule, striking contrasts of light and shade, and variations of mid-

summer green. They are faithful to nature and at the same time idealistic.

Like all great spirits he created and lived in a world of his own. He was fond of companionship, however, and ready at almost any time to enter with childlike enthusiasm into a genuine frolic. At times there were enacted in his studio merry scenes recalling the artists' pranks in *La Bohème*. His home in Berkeley, moreover, was a center of intellectual sociability, a meeting place for the professors at the University and distinguished scientists, writers, artists, and men and women of affairs. He and his wife were great comrades. Perhaps the most intimate of his friends, however, was the Rev. Joseph Worcester, pastor of the Swedenborgian Church in San Francisco, in which are to be found four of Mr. Keith's most successful paintings—representing the four seasons as seen in California landscape. Mr. Worcester is not only

a lover of art, but a discriminating critic of remarkable artistic intuition, and Mr. Keith valued his criticism above all others.

Mr. Keith maintained that he had a limited clientele, inasmuch as his pictures could only appeal to those of like temperament and vision, but it is probable that he did not take into account the ele-

ment of universality which every great work possesses to some extent. Certainly his pictures explain themselves and have found much favor. They are included in the permanent collections of the Chicago Art Institute, the Brooklyn Institute, the Corcoran Gallery of Art and the National Gallery of Art, as well as in many private collections. M. S.



NEWCOMB POTTERY

BY WILLIAM P. SILVA

ABOUT fifteen years ago it became evident to Mr. Ellsworth Woodward, the head of the Art Department of Newcomb College, New Orleans, that his teaching of design, however successful in itself, was somewhat of a failure, in that it left the graduate with no chance of using the knowledge which had been gained at the expense of so much time and thought. Being a man of energy and resources Mr. Woodward set to work to find a remedy. The course was apparent at once; there were no factories nor workshops in or around New Orleans in which it was thought that artistic design could be used. Very well, then; he must build up something, and with the hearty co-operation of President Dixon of the College it was decided to establish a pottery. Miss Mary G. Sheerer, of New Orleans,

who had studied at the Cincinnati Art School and had some knowledge of the practical work of a pottery, was put in charge. Other departments of applied arts were added later.

The beginning was made in a very modest way in 1896. It being the idea to use only such material as could be gotten close at hand, things were necessarily largely experimental at first. It required much loving enthusiasm to keep out despair, when time after time the work of weeks was destroyed in a single bad kiln. But they wept and then smiled and tried again and so step by step they went from experiment to knowledge, from repeated failure to ultimate success, and within less than four years the product became so truly good that the little collection hastily gotten together for the Paris exposi-